

# VATICAN COUNCIL II

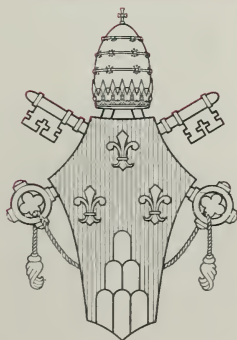
Opening Address

Third Session

POPE PAUL VI

September 14, 1964

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National Catholic Welfare Conference

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ADDRESS DELIVERED BY  
POPE PAUL VI AT THE OPENING  
OF THE THIRD SESSION OF  
VATICAN COUNCIL II

September 14, 1964

UNDER the sign of the Holy Cross, in whose honor we have concelebrated holy Mass, we open today the third session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. The Church is present here. We are the Church. We are the Church as members of the Mystical Body of Christ, for God has granted us the inestimable favor of being baptized, of being believers united by love and constituting the consecrated and visible people of God. We are the Church since we are ministers of the Church herself, priests invested with a special character received at our sacramental ordination.

On us are conferred marvelous and tremendous powers, making of us a hierarchy entrusted with functions meant to perpetuate in time and to extend on earth the saving mission of Christ. We are the Church, finally, because as teachers of the Faith, pastors of souls, stewards of the mysteries of God,<sup>1</sup> we represent here the entire Church, not as delegates or deputies of the faithful toward whom our ministry is directed, but as fathers and brothers who personify the communities entrusted to the care of each one of us, and as a plenary assembly legitimately convoked by the Holy Father.

The Pope has called the council into session in his capacity, which links him with all of you, as your brother, the bishop of historic Rome, and as the humble but authentic successor of the

Apostle Peter—before whose tomb we are devoutly gathered—and therefore as the unworthy but true head of the Catholic Church and Vicar of Christ, servant of the servants of God.

Recapitulating in our persons and in our functions the universal Church, we proclaim this council ecumenical. Here is the exercise of unity, here the exercise of that universality by which the Church gives evidence of her prodigious vitality, her marvelous capacity to make men brothers and to welcome within her embrace the most diverse civilizations and languages, the most individualized liturgies and types of spirituality, the most varied expressions of national, social and cultural genius, harmonizing all in felicitous union, yet always respecting legitimate variety and complexity.

Here is the exercise of the holiness of the Church because here she calls on the mercy of God for the weaknesses and deficiencies of the sinners that we are, and because here as nowhere else do we become aware of the power granted to our ministry to draw from the “unfathomable riches of Christ”<sup>2</sup> the treasures of salvation and sanctification for all men.

Here we realize that this ministry of ours has no other purpose than to “prepare for the Lord a perfect people.”<sup>3</sup> Here, finally, is made manifest the apostolicity of the Church, a prerogative which is a marvel even to us, to us who have experienced our own weakness and who know how history bears witness to the frailty of even the most powerful of human institutions.

And at the same time we know with what continuity and fidelity the mandate of Christ has been transmitted from the Apostles to our lowly and ever astonished persons. We know how inexplicably and how triumphantly the Church has endured throughout the ages, this Church which is ever living and always capable of finding in herself the irrepressible spirit of youth.

At this point we can repeat with Tertullian: “It is the whole Christian world which is here represented and which we venerate. And see how good it is that from all sides men are gathered because of faith in Christ! See how good and happy it is for brothers to dwell together!”<sup>4</sup>

Now if the Church is here, here also is the Spirit, the Advo-

cate, whom Christ promised to His apostles for the building up of the Church: "I will ask the Father and He will give you another Advocate to dwell with you forever, the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you shall know Him, because He will dwell with you, and be in you." <sup>5</sup>

For there are, as we know, two factors which Christ has promised and arranged in different ways to continue His mission, to extend in time and on earth the kingdom He founded and to make of redeemed mankind His Church, His Mystical Body, His fulness, in expectation of His definitive and triumphant return at the end of time.

These two factors are the apostolate and the Spirit.

The apostolate is the external and objective factor. It forms the material body, so to speak, of the Church and is the source of her visible and social structures.

The Holy Spirit is the internal factor who acts within each person, as well as on the whole community, animating, vivifying, sanctifying.

These two agents, the apostolate which is entrusted to the sacred hierarchy, and the Spirit of Jesus, which uses the hierarchy as its ordinary instrument in the ministry of the word and the sacraments, cooperate with one another. Pentecost shows them wonderfully linked at the beginning of the great work of Jesus, who although invisible remains ever present in His apostles and their successors, "whom He set over His Church as His shepherds and vicars." <sup>6</sup> These two agents, differently yet harmoniously, bear equal witness to Christ the Lord in a combination that confers on apostolic activity its supernatural force.<sup>7</sup>

May we believe that the salvific plan, by which the redemption of Christ reaches and is fulfilled in us, is even now in action? Yes, my brethren, we may believe, indeed, that this plan is continued and actuated by our means, in virtue of a power and sufficiency that comes from God, "who has made us fit ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit . . . which gives life." <sup>8</sup> To doubt this would be an insult to Christ's faithfulness to His promises, a betrayal of our apostolic mandate,



depriving the Church of her certainty, which the Divine Word has guaranteed and history has confirmed, and of her indefectibility.

The Spirit is here, not yet to confirm with sacramental grace the work which all of us, united in the council, are bringing to completion, but rather to illuminate and guide our labors to the benefit of the Church and all mankind. The Spirit is here. We call upon Him, wait for Him, follow Him. The Spirit is here.

Let us reflect on this doctrine and this present reality so that, above all, we may realize once more and in the fullest and most sublime degree possible our communion with the living Christ. It is the Spirit who joins us to Him. Let us reflect on this truth also that we may put ourselves before Him in trepidation, fully at His disposal; that we may become aware of the humiliating emptiness of our misery and the crying need we have of His help and mercy; that we may hear as if spoken in the secret recesses of our soul the words of the Apostle: "Discharging . . . this ministry in accordance with the mercy shown us, we do not lose heart." <sup>9</sup>

The council is for us a moment of deep interior docility, a moment of complete and filial adherence to the word of the Lord, a moment of fervent, earnest invocation and of love, a moment of spiritual exaltation. To this unique occasion the poetic words of St. Ambrose apply with a special aptness: "Let us drink in joy the sober inebriation of the Spirit." <sup>10</sup> Such for us should be this blessed time of council.

And finally we have this to say: The hour has sounded in history when the Church, which expresses herself in us and which from us receives structure and life, must say of herself what Christ intended and willed her to be, and what the age-long meditation of the fathers, pontiffs and doctors in their wisdom has explored with piety and fidelity. The Church must give a definition of herself and bring out from her true consciousness the doctrine which the Holy Spirit teaches her, according to the Lord's promise "but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your mind whatever I have said to you." <sup>11</sup> "The Spirit Himself gives testimony to our spirit that we are sons of God." <sup>12</sup>

Thus must be completed the doctrine that the First Vatican Council was preparing to enunciate, but which external obstacles

prevented it from defining, except in its first part dealing with the head of the Church, the Roman pontiff, and his sovereign prerogatives regarding primacy of jurisdiction and infallibility of teaching, which Christ was pleased to bestow upon the Apostle Peter, His visible vicar on earth, and upon those who succeed him in so sublime and tremendous an office.

The discussion on this doctrine remains to be completed, so as to explain the mind of Christ on the whole of His Church and especially on the nature and function of the successors of the apostles, that is of the episcopate, with which dignity and office the greater part of you, venerable Fathers, and we ourselves, most reverend brothers, are of God's good pleasure invested.

The council has many other important subjects to deal with, but this one seems to us to be the weightiest and most delicate. The council's deliberations on this subject will certainly be what distinguishes this solemn and historic synod in the memory of future ages. It must undertake a number of difficult theological discussions. It must determine the nature and mission of the pastors of the Church. It must discuss, and with the favor of the Holy Spirit, decide the constitutional prerogatives of the episcopate. It must delineate the relations between the episcopate and the Holy See. It must show how homogeneous is the constitutional idea of the Church under its differing Eastern and Western expressions. It must make clear for the faithful of the Catholic Church and also for the separated brethren the true notion of the hierarchical organs in which "the Holy Spirit has placed you as bishops to rule the Church of God,"<sup>13</sup> with unquestionably valid authority in the humble and patient service of the brethren, as becomes pastors—ministers, that is—of faith and charity.

These thoughts are all the more important for us, and certainly for you, venerable brothers, because of the fact that this third session of the ecumenical council has chosen from among its many concerns this central objective: to investigate and clarify the doctrine of the nature of the Church, thus resuming and integrating the work done in the first two sessions, and making this solemn synod the logical continuation of the First Vatican Council.

At this point the Church wants to study itself, or rather probe into the mind of Christ, its divine Founder: just what and how

much to say in order to honor His wisdom and charity and, by restoring to Him the full practice of its faith and fidelity, to render itself an even more fit instrument in the work of salvation for which it was founded.

But in case anyone should think that in doing this the Church is closing in on itself in an attitude of complacency, forgetting on the one hand Christ, from whom it receives everything and to whom it owes everything, or on the other hand humanity, to whose service it is committed, it places itself between Him and the world, not satisfied with itself, not as a forbidding barrier, not as an end in itself, but deeply concerned to be completely the Church of Christ, in Christ and for Christ, as well as completely the Church of men, among men and for men, humble and yet glorious, the Church of the Saviour and yet reaching out to all men, preserving and yet diffusing the truth and the grace of the supernatural life.

In our time which seems to be blessed in a special way, this seems to be all the more true and important, for today the inquiry concerning the Church will have a point of great interest for us, and especially for you, namely the hierarchic structure of the Church itself, and consequently the origin, nature, function and power of the episcopate, which is a major part of the hierarchy, in which with us "the Holy Spirit has made you bishops . . . to keep watch . . . over God's Church." <sup>14</sup>

And so we have in mind to tune in with a plan of Divine Providence in celebrating this historic moment by giving to you, our venerated and beloved brothers in the episcopate, the honor which Our Lord desired to be shown to the apostles together with Peter.

The Fathers of the First Vatican Council defined and proclaimed the truly unique and supreme powers conferred by Christ on Peter and handed on to his successors. This recognition has appeared to some as having limited the authority of bishops, the successors of the Apostles, and as having rendered superfluous and prevented the convocation of a subsequent ecumenical council, which, however, according to canon law has supreme authority over the entire Church.

The present ecumenical synod is certainly going to confirm the doctrine of the previous one regarding the prerogatives of the



Roman pontiff. But it will also have as its principal objective the task of describing and honoring the prerogatives of the episcopate.

Let every one understand that the convocation of this council has been a free and spontaneous act on the part of our venerated predecessor of happy memory, John XXIII, an act which we have readily confirmed, knowing full well that the theme of this sovereign and sacred assembly would deal with the episcopate. It could not have been otherwise, taking into consideration not only the proper interconnection of the doctrines concerned but also because of a sincere determination to proclaim the glory, the mission, the merits and the friendship of our brothers entrusted with the work of instructing, sanctifying and governing the Church of God.

Let us repeat as our own those well-known words which our distant and saintly predecessor of immortal memory, Gregory the Great, wrote to Eulogius, Bishop of Alexandria: "My honor is the honor of the universal Church. My honor is the strength of my brothers. I am thus truly honored when the honor due to each and every one of them is not denied to them."<sup>15</sup>

The integrity of catholic truth now calls for a clarification consonant with the doctrine of the papacy which will place in its splendid light the role and mandate of the episcopate. In its work of tracing the outlines of such a role and such a mandate, the council will be anxious about nothing except interpreting the thought of Jesus Christ at its true source and genuine origin.

We have already had the pleasure of recognizing in the bishops our true brothers, addressing them, as the Apostle Peter did, as "elders," and gladly claiming for ourselves the equivalent title of "fellow elder."<sup>16</sup> We have had the pleasure of addressing to them the words of the Apostle Paul: "My partners in tribulations and consolations."<sup>17</sup> We have been anxious to reassure them of those religious convictions that characterize our relations with them: esteem, affection, solidarity. We are bound by our duty to recognize them as the teachers, rulers and sanctifiers of the Christian people, the "stewards of the mysteries of God,"<sup>18</sup> the witnesses to the Gospel, the ministers of the New Testament and, in a certain sense, the very reflection of the glory of the Lord.<sup>19</sup>

As successors of Peter and, therefore, as possessors of full power over the entire Church, we have the duty of heading the body

of the episcopate, although we are surely unworthy of this dignity. Nevertheless, our position in no way defrauds you, our brother bishops, of your due authority. On the contrary, we are among the first to respect that sacred authority. If our apostolic duty obliges us to impose restrictions, to define terminology, to prescribe modes of action, to regulate the methods which concern the exercise of episcopal authority, you realize that this is done for the good of the entire Church, for the unity of that Church which has proportionately greater need of centralized leadership as its worldwide extension becomes more complete, as more serious dangers and more pressing needs threaten the Christian people in the varying circumstances of history and, we may add, as more rapid means of communication become operative in modern times.

No one should regard such centralization as a device formulated by pride. Centralization will surely be always tempered and balanced by an alert and timely delegation both of authority and of facilities for local pastors. We assure you, our brothers in the episcopate, that this centralization is rather a service and a manifestation of the unifying and hierarchical spirit of the Church. It is the glory, the power, the beauty which Christ promised to His Church and which He gradually grants to it as the ages run their course.

Apropos of this topic, we can recall the words which Pius XII of happy memory addressed to a certain group of bishops: "This union and this timely communication with the Holy See arises, not from a kind of longing to achieve centralization and homogeneity, but rather from the divine law itself and from a truly fundamental principle affecting the very essence of the Church of Christ." <sup>20</sup>

Such centralization strengthens rather than weakens the authority of bishops, whether that authority be considered in the individual bishop or in the collegiality of the bishops. O how deeply we admire, how staunchly we support the rights and duties proper to the sacred hierarchy, which is the very instrument, born of the charity of Christ, and fashioned by Him to complete, to communicate, and to safeguard the integral and fruitful transmission of the Treasures of Faith, of example, of precepts, and of favors bequeathed by Christ to His Church!

The hierarchy is the mother of the community of the faithful. It is the architect of its visible framework. It is the public representative which wins for the Church the titles of mother and teacher. It is the bearer of the riches of the sacraments, the conductor of the symphony of prayer, the inspiration of works of charity.

Placed at the head of the sacred institution, how could we fail to devote to it our solicitude, our trust, our support? How could we fail to defend it? What duty presses upon us with greater frequency, with graver consequence, or with deeper satisfaction than that of safeguarding the independence, the freedom, the dignity of sacred hierarchy throughout the world? Is it not true that this exhausting task has been the very fabric from which has been woven the tapestry of the history of the papacy, especially in these years of political upheavals?

Let us add one further thought to this tribute to the episcopate in order to show how much its intrinsic nobility and its effective charity are enhanced by the harmonious unity which must bind it in close union with the Apostolic See, and how much the Apostolic See needs you, venerable brothers.

For your part, dispersed as you are all over the world, if you are to give shape and substance to the true catholicity of the Church, you have need of a center, a principle of unity in faith and communion, a unifying power, such as, in fact, you find in this Chair of Peter. Similarly, we need to have you always nearby, to give more fully to the countenance of the Apostolic See its beauty, its human and historic reality, even to give harmony to its faith, to be an example in the fulfilment of its duties and a consolation in its times of stress.

So that, while we look forward to the clearer definition which the council's deliberations will give to the doctrine of the episcopacy, we here and now pay you honor, pledge to you our affection as brother and father, and ask of you cooperation and support. May the communion, which binds together the Catholic hierarchy in living faith and charity, emerge from this council deeper, stronger and more holy. It will be to the glory of Christ, the peace of the Church and the light of the world.

There is much more we would like to say on this question and

on many others of the first importance which have been brought up for the attention of the council, but we do not wish to tax your patience.

However we cannot forego the pleasure of sending a special greeting at this moment from this Holy See to the various dioceses and parishes which you represent here; first of all to our beloved and esteemed priests who labor so unselfishly in collaboration with their bishops; and to Religious, striving for every perfection that will make them like Christ and of service to their fellow men; to the Catholic laity, working with the hierarchy for the good of the Church and for the good of society; to the poor, the persecuted and the suffering; and especially to those whom the lack of freedom still prevents from coming to this council.

We wish also to welcome the auditors here present. Their high ideals and outstanding merits are not secret to us. And we are delighted to welcome among the auditors our beloved daughters in Christ, the first women in history to participate in a conciliar assembly. The auditors—both men and women—will not be slow to realize that behind this welcome of ours lies our fatherly love for all groups who make up the people of God, our desire to give the Christian community an ever-increasing sense of harmony, collaboration and charity.

And now we turn to you, the observers, with reverence and esteem, for you have once more accepted our invitation to attend the council. We welcome and thank you. We wish to assure you once more of our purpose and hope to be able one day to remove every obstacle, every misunderstanding, every hesitancy that still prevents us from feeling fully “of one heart and one soul” in Christ, in His Church.<sup>21</sup>

For our part, we shall do everything possible to this end. We are fully aware that the restoration of this unity is something of no small moment, and we shall give it all the attention and the time that it calls for. It is something new, in contrast with the long, sad history which led up to the various separations, and we shall wait patiently for the conditions to ripen that will make possible a positive and friendly solution. It is something, too, of deepest significance, having its roots in the mysterious counsels of God, and we shall strive, in humility and faith, to dispose ourselves to deserve so great a grace.



We recall the words of the Apostle Paul, who brought the gift of the Gospel to all nations, seeking to become "all things to all men,"<sup>22</sup> such an adaptability as we might today be tempted to call "pluralism in practice." At the same time we recall how the same apostle has exhorted us to "preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" because there is only "one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all."<sup>23</sup>

We shall therefore strive, in loyalty to the unity of Christ's Church, to understand better and to welcome all that is genuine and admissible in the different Christian denominations that are distinct from us. And at the same time we beg of them to try to understand the Catholic Faith and life better and, when we invite them to enter into the fulness of truth and charity which, as an unmerited blessing but a formidable responsibility, Christ has charged us to preserve, we beg them not to take it in bad part, but as being prompted by respect and brotherly love. For that fulness of truth and charity will be made the more manifest when all those who profess the Name of Christ are reassembled into one.

Meanwhile, through you, our reverend and esteemed guests and observers in this council, we wish to send our cordial greetings to the various Christian communities which you represent. May our respectful regard also reach those which are not represented here. We gather together in our prayer and our affections all those members who are still parted from the full spiritual and visible wholeness of the Mystical Body of Christ; and in this yearning of our love and concern, our sorrow grows, our hopes increase.

O churches that are so far and yet so close to us, churches for whom our heart is filled with longing, churches that are the nostalgia of our sleepless nights, churches of our tears and of our desire to do you honor by our embrace in the sincere love of Christ!

O may you hear, sounding from this keystone of unity, the tomb of Peter, apostle and martyr, and from this ecumenical council of brotherhood and peace, the loving cry we send you! Maybe great distances still separate us, maybe it will be long before our full and effective meeting can be realized. But know for sure that already we hold you in our heart. May the God of mercies support our deeply felt yearning and hope.

And finally may our thoughts go out to the world about us,



with its own interests, also with its indifference, perhaps even its hostility. We renew the greeting which we addressed to it from Bethlehem with our resolute purpose of placing the Church at the service of its spiritual salvation and of its social prosperity, to bring it peace and true happiness.

We invite you all now, venerable brothers, to call upon the Holy Spirit together, as we make ready to inaugurate the third session of this Second Vatican Council, and in the name of the Lord, with trust in the help of Mary Most Holy and of the holy apostles, Peter and Paul, we bestow upon you all our apostolic blessing.

### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> 1 *Cor.* 4, 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Eph.* 3, 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Lk.* 1, 17.

<sup>4</sup> *De Ieuniis*, C. XIII; *P.L.* 11, 1024.

<sup>5</sup> *Jn.* 14, 16-17.

<sup>6</sup> Preface, Mass of apostles.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. 1 *Pet.* 1, 12.

<sup>8</sup> 2 *Cor.* 3, 6.

<sup>9</sup> 2 *Cor.* 4, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Hymn at Lauds.

<sup>11</sup> *Jn.* 14, 26.

<sup>12</sup> *Rom.* 8, 16.

<sup>13</sup> *Acts* 20, 28.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Acts* 20, 28.

<sup>15</sup> 8, 30., *P.L.*, 77, 933.

<sup>16</sup> 1 *Pt.* 5, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. 2 *Cor.* 1, 7.

<sup>18</sup> 1 *Cor.* 4, 1.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. 2 *Cor.* 3, 6-18.

<sup>20</sup> *A.A.S.*, 1954, P. 676.

<sup>21</sup> *Acts* 4, 32.

<sup>22</sup> 1 *Cor.* 9, 22.

<sup>23</sup> *Eph.* 4, 2, 5-6.

# ON REOPENING VATICAN COUNCIL II

**Letter of September 1, 1964 from Pope Paul VI to Eugene Cardinal Tisserant, dean of the council of presidents of the Ecumenical Council**

TO OUR VENERABLE BROTHER: HEALTH AND APOSTOLIC BENE-  
DICTION:

THE resumption of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council is now at hand. The third session, as already decided and announced, will begin on September 14, the day which the liturgy devotes to the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. This date for the resumption of the conciliar work was not arrived at by chance, but, as it were, to indicate the source from whence springs our salvation and whence the Church draws its trust in the happy outcome of this great synod—that is to say, from the Passion of our most merciful and most beloved Redeemer.

We wish to give due honor to this great mystery, celebrating its perennial and salutary memory, by offering to God at the opening of the conciliar session the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass which represents and renews in an unbloody manner the work of our redemption. We intend to perform this sacred rite as a first and essential act of the ecumenical council, which is about to assemble again, by means of a solemn concelebration by 24 conciliar Fathers chosen from various orders and regions, and united to us.

We wish this for the council so that the infusion of hearts and souls may be more evident to all and more efficacious in the sight of God, forming “one heart and one soul,”<sup>1</sup> of all those who are taking part in the holy assembly. We wish also through it

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<sup>1</sup> *Acts* 4, 32.

to implore divine assistance for our common labors—that assistance which is our supreme guide in the arduous and humble search for the divine will on the part of the whole Catholic Church. In fact, the ecumenical council convened around the successor of St. Peter is, as everyone knows, a true representation of the universal Church, a fact which was stated by the Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council.

We write this to you, our venerable brother and dean of the Sacred College, so that you whom we have confirmed in the very high office of first member of the Council of Presidents of the Second Vatican Council, may exhort, in our name and authority, the conciliar Fathers to come punctually to the ecumenical synod itself, and to prepare their souls for it, as for an exceptional moment in the life of the Church.

The Church can hope all the more to be inspired and led by the Holy Spirit the more intensely, the more harmoniously and the more humbly are souls mutually disposed to receive grace. Such an extraordinary moment must be lived with inner meditation, with intense fervor, with humble piety, with absolute faithfulness to the precepts of Christ, with vigilant attention to the needs of the Church and the world.

Nor should your exhortation be limited to the conciliar Fathers to celebrate the great event with spiritual fulness. We desire that you extend it also, through the pastors whom you address, to all the faithful: to priests first of all; to Religious men and women; to all the family of Catholics who aspire to live in conscious and close communion with the Church; also to those afflicted with disease of mind or body, who are already joined to the Church; and to innocent boys and girls—the joy and adornment of the Church.

It is necessary indeed that each member of the Mystical Body of Christ consider this singular and historic event of the ecumenical council as pertaining to himself, and that each participate in the council with an attentive and ardent fellowship. True, when the earlier sessions of the ecumenical council began, an invitation of this sort went out to the whole Church. However, it seems wise to reiterate it—on the one hand because people's interest can diminish the more accustomed they become to this assembly—

and against this we must guard; and on the other hand because the gravity of the council's acts and decisions is increasing as the discussions of the various topics suggested for study and deliberation by that body are being brought to conclusion.

There are two forms, proven by usage as is evident, whereby the faithful as individuals as well as the Church in community can join spiritually in an event of such religious and moral value, and contribute to its success: penance and prayer. By the former, man is disposed to remove the obstacles from his soul—that is to say sins and perverse tendencies—which stand in the way of his reconciliation with God. By the latter, he is prepared to receive the abundance of heavenly mercy.

Both are opportune to make way for the divine action of renewal, and each contributes to that ineffable meeting, so to speak, of two wills: the will of man which is purified when it submits itself in humility and is prompted urgently to ask and to hope; and the Will of God, which can penetrate freely the vacuum of man's heart and, in that encounter, infuses and inflames it with Love transcending nature.

We should like, therefore, that from your own voice, Venerable Brother, as if it were the voice of the whole council, the whole Catholic Church might be exhorted to some special acts of penance and of prayer.

This is our suggestion: This year, let the Ember days which fall on September 23, 25 and 26 be sanctified. Let those who can fast on these days do so, and let everyone regard it as an obligation to practice some exercise of mortification and penance. And let all feel it a duty to address the Lord special prayers of expiation and supplication. And on Sunday, September 27, throughout the world, in every gathering of the faithful and in every ecclesiastical community, universal prayers should be recited for the successful outcome of the ecumenical council. This could be accomplished significantly through a solemn recitation of the "Our Father."

As everyone knows, we regard as a happy outcome of the council the renewal of the spirit of Jesus Christ in His Church, the reincorporation into its unity of the brothers who are still separated from us, the reawakening of the religious conscience in the world, the strengthening of justice and peace among men.

These are aims for the highest and general good. No one, we hope, will fail to share the strong desire for the fulfilment of these wishes, for which you, venerable Brother—a proponent as authoritative as you are benevolent—will certainly be given sincere and prompt adherence by pious and generous-hearted people.

For this understanding which we all share, we express our gratitude to you in advance, while we grant you, as well as to the universal Church and to the world, our apostolic benediction.





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